



PRESS RELEASE

Baker-Polito Administration Supports Nine Community-Driven Initiatives

Urban Agenda Grant Program builds on community-driven initiatives to create new economic opportunities for residents

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Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development

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REVERE — Today, the Baker-Polito Administration awarded \$500,000 to nine projects through the [Urban Agenda Grant Program](#). The program seeks to unlock community-driven responses to local obstacles, and promote economic development opportunities through partnership-building, problem solving, and shared accountability in urban centers. The competitive awards offer flexible funding for local efforts that bring together community stakeholders to pursue economic development initiatives. These awards will fund projects in Boston, Clinton, Framingham, Greenfield, Holyoke, Lowell, New Bedford, Revere and Springfield. Funding will support workforce development, small businesses, and entrepreneurship initiatives.

“Our administration utilizes the urban agenda grant program to support communities with strong local leadership committed to pursuing high-impact projects,” **said Governor Charlie Baker.** “These urban agenda awards will help residents re-enter the workforce, provide technical assistance to small businesses, support entrepreneurs and invest in collaborative partnerships.”

“Our administration understands the importance of local leadership and its impact on the lives of residents,” **said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito.** “The Urban Agenda Grant Program relies on the strong partnerships between local government, non-profits and the business community that are critical to fostering economic success and building stronger neighborhoods in every region in Massachusetts.”

The Urban Agenda Grant Program provides grants to communities working to provide residents with economic opportunities and workforce training. The program prioritizes projects that are based on collaborative work models that feature a strong partnership between community organizations and municipalities. Awards prioritize collaboration, shared accountability and building leadership capacity at the local level.

“Stable, vital communities have the support of effective non-profits, successful local businesses, and committed municipal leadership,” **said Housing and Economic Development Secretary Jay Ash.** “Today’s awards address tough challenges in our urban centers by empowering these important coalitions to identify their resources, work together towards shared goals and create new opportunities for residents.”

The Commonwealth’s Urban Agenda is focused on promoting economic vitality and cultivating safer, stronger urban neighborhoods across Massachusetts. The Baker-Polito Administration recognizes that urban centers face unique economic and quality-of-life challenges, and that the path to success lies in tapping into the unique local assets that they already possess, rather than in one-size-fits-all directives from government.

“The Urban Agenda \$50,000 Grant will help fund The Neighborhood Developers to establish a satellite office in Revere of CONNECT to serve as an access point to CONNECT’S one-stop career center and financial capability services,” **said Revere Mayor Brian M. Arrigo.** “Thanks to this grant, Revere can turn to the talented, dedicated staff at CONNECT for help finding a job, developing employment skills, and growing skills vital to personal management of household finances.”

“The Neighborhood Developers is at the forefront of promoting economic diversity, opportunity, and quality of life for Revere’s most vulnerable populations through their extraordinary collaboration with city and state government,” **said Senator Joseph A. Boncore.** “This grant provides Revere and TND the opportunity to build on that success by investing in strategic growth and development.”

“Urban Agenda grants are a vital tool in helping our cities leverage their strengths to address the issues unique to each community,” **said House Speaker Robert A. DeLeo.** “I am pleased that Revere and The Neighborhood Developers have been awarded funding to support workforce development and training programs that will better prepare our residents for the city’s changing economic landscape.”

“The Urban Agenda Grant Program is a wonderful example of how the state can partner with cities to help foster and cultivate economic vitality in communities like Revere,” **said Representative RoseLee**

Vincent. “I would like to thank the administration for its generosity in granting Revere these funds, and I want to thank Mayor Arrigo and the Neighborhood Developers for working together to establish a CONNECT Center for residents of Revere. This will surely become an asset to our community by helping residents gain critical workforce development tools.”

In 2016, the Baker-Polito Administration [awarded](#) \$3 million in grant funding to 13 communities for the inaugural round of the Urban Agenda Grant Program. Urban Agenda is administered by the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED), and offers flexible grant funding to support creative local partnerships. The program is for neighborhoods across Massachusetts that have developed partnerships that leverage existing economic assets, target specific workforce populations, define their economic development and quality of life goals, and deliver on those goals.

Urban Agenda Awards:

Boston, The Urban Farming Institute of Boston - \$40,000

The project, Working Well, will be based at the newly completed historic Fowler Clark Epstein Farm in Mattapan. It is a new collaboration between the Urban Farming Institute of Boston (UFI) and Baraka Community Wellness (BCW) who are committed to increasing economic resilience in Mattapan by providing tools and training for individuals and families to grow food for market and for themselves, and learn skills of preparation and overall wellness.

Clinton, Town of Clinton - \$25,000

Funding will enable a feasibility and program analysis in support of a public-private makerspace in downtown Clinton. The facility will be a venue for hands-on, project based learning for youth; for workplace readiness and skills training to support our local population and employers, and: a laboratory to support creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. The town and school district will collaborate with the North Central Mass Workforce Investment Board, Worcester Think Tank, Clinton Adult Learning Center, and local businesses and residents to identify implementation costs, local workforce readiness needs, and a sustainable organizational model for non-school use of the makerspace.

Framingham, South Middlesex Opportunity Council, Inc. - \$75,000

The Framingham Business Resource Alliance (the Alliance) seeks to sustain and deepen its partnership, support SMOC’s Microloan program, and effectively provide personalized assistance to local small businesses, complementing Framingham’s economic development efforts including Choose Framingham, Framingham Downtown Renaissance and Transit Oriented Development.

Greenfield, City of Greenfield - \$75,000

Second Chance Employment and Training Initiative (SCETI) will implement an alternative staffing model to better engage people in recovery with complex barriers to employment in the workforce. Harmon Personnel Services and Gardner Athol Area Mental Health Association, key partners in the initiative, will partner with the efforts of the City of Greenfield, the Opioid Task Force and other community organization and stakeholders to give residents on their journey to a successful and sustainable recovery, skills towards self-sufficiency.

Holyoke, Greater Holyoke Chamber Centennial Foundation Inc. - \$60,000

SPARK is an entrepreneurship program of the Greater Holyoke Chamber Centennial Foundation (GHCCF), and facilitates a partnership of 12 community partners that each offer resources for entrepreneurs in and around Holyoke. SPARK brings partners together to establish an ecosystem that supports entrepreneurs by coordinating existing services and providing an inclusive community of mentors and technical assistance, including workshops, networking events, a multi week business accelerator and, in the coming year, a new coworkspace. SPARK's goal is to strengthen and grow Holyoke's economy from within, helping residents tap into their potential to create business ventures in the city and region.

Lowell, Coalition for a Better Acre - \$50,000

Lowell's project expands Coalition for a Better Acre's (CBA) workforce development system, Supported Training and Education Program (STEP) by integrating resources provided by our Working Cities Lowell Initiative (WCLI) partners. STEP's focus on communication, work ethic, leadership, workers' rights, and conflict resolution combined with increased case management and wrap-around services from WCLI members will make a larger collective impact on low-income, immigrant and refugee neighbors we all serve. Together, they will prepare participants for and place them in career-track jobs, while providing support and resources to help them and their families become economically self-sufficient, breaking the cycle of multi-generational poverty

New Bedford, Greater New Bedford Workforce Investment Board, Inc. - \$50,000

WEB New Bedford (the WomEntrepreneurship and Business New Bedford) is a collaborative effort to help women start and grow their businesses. WEB New Bedford aligns with the New Bedford 2020 Master Plan as a comprehensive strategy for economic development through business assistance and access to seed funds. The project will recruit participants with a focus on women, minority, and/or Puerto Rican hurricane relocates. Activities include Bristol Community College entrepreneurship courses and support from 12 partners.

Revere, The Neighborhood Developers - \$50,000

Revere is rebuilding its economic and employment base by utilizing large-scale and high value assets including Suffolk Downs, Wonderland, a soon-to-close NECCO plant, and the MassDevelopment TDI Waterfront District. Urban Agenda funding will help establish workforce development services in Revere to support local residents to acquire newly created jobs. Primary goals include: 1) establish employment and financial capability services in Revere led by CONNECT; 2) complete a Mayor-led workforce development plan; and 3) launch job training beginning with the hospitality sector that will create Revere-based jobs.

Springfield, Economic Development Council of Western Mass - \$75,000

For every 100 Springfield residents of working age, 42 are not working, yet employers do not have enough qualified candidates to support operations and growth. Springfield WORKS is a coalition of over 30 partners including employers, residents, educators, and community-based organizations (CBOs). Partners developed strategies to align resources and systems to connect job-seekers and employers in need of highly skilled candidates.. This grant will allow the council to leverage existing assets and expand coaching and mentoring programs to help low income Springfield residents achieve long term, economic success through meaningful work.

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